

# Travel Big Spend Less: A Guide to Studying Abroad

A blog for college students to find ways to travel on a budget.

A book for college students who are planning on studying abroad.



A Senior Project presented to The Faculty of the Journalism Department California  
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Journalism

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## **Abstract**

Travel Big Spend Less is a blog designed for college students who are looking for inspiration and ways to travel on a budget. I started this website after taking Advanced Digital Journalism (JOUR 410) and finding a way to keep my study abroad spirit alive. Creating the website from scratch as well as creating multimedia journalism components for the website have been one part of this project.

After starting this platform my friend and I who studied abroad together decided that we should write a book as well. The book is titled “A Guide to Studying Abroad.” Both the blog and the book will work with each other in the hopes of attracting college students and eventually getting enough sales and traffic to the website that we start to make a profit.

This process has been difficult since I have had to not only create a website but also write content for the site as well as design brand elements. In addition, self-publishing has been the biggest teaching experience. Additionally, I have learned the fundamentals of what it takes to publish a book. For instance, I have had to find the right editor and the right designer to format the book into both print and digital. I have started from the ground up to create a book with the necessary marketing and advertising to get there. I have been able to tackle each of these steps and succeed because of many journalism and marketing classes that I have taken.

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## **Identify Client**

Travel Big Spend Less / A guide to Studying Abroad

[travelbigspendless@gmail.com](mailto:travelbigspendless@gmail.com)

Jessica Sharpe - Founder & Author

(818) 456-7328

Madison Somerday - Founder & Author

## **History:**

After studying abroad last year, Mada and Jessica felt a compelling need to continue traveling and to share our journey with others. The two met through Facebook and decided to be freshman roommates in the dorms. After freshman year they lived together all the way through junior year. During their Junior year, they decided to study abroad together in Prague. They often call themselves the freshman success story.

Studying abroad was not something that was necessarily easy to plan nor easy to get themselves to do. Luckily, they figured it all out and had the best experience while abroad. After coming back to school Mada and Jess both felt like they were dealing with “post abroad depression”. It only took a few months for them to realize that sharing their abroad journey, writing about travel, and inspiring others to embark on studying abroad

was really near and dear to their hearts. For that reason, they decided to start a blog titled, "Travel Big Spend less" as well as write a study abroad book for other college students.

**What kind of products and services does this company or nonprofit organization provide? Of these, which is it best known for?**

Currently, the service they provide is a blog as well as a soon to be published book.

**How is the company organized in terms of management and leadership?**

Jessica and Madison are the only two people apart of this blog and book. Jessica was in charge of creating the website because she developed the skills from Jour 410.

Madison and Jessica both play an equal role in writing the blog content as well as the book.

**What is the competitive environment?**

Studying abroad is a very common thing amongst college students and there are many travel books and blogs out there. There is a competitive environment for this client.

However, there are very limited study abroad books. In fact, there are no study abroad books written by college students who experienced it themselves. Madison and Jessica give a unique perspective to this experience since they are college students who recently were in their shoes.

**Does the company have a mission statement or an organizational philosophy?**

The mission statement is to provide students with inspiration, tools, and knowledge to take on their study abroad journey as well as other travel opportunities.

**Vision:**

The vision is to become the number one study abroad book in the U.S. and to have their own speaking engagements to inspire students to dream and take on their dreams. In addition, the two plans to continue writing books and blog posts while traveling the world. They hope to get seen by a publisher that wants to sponsor them.

**Perceived Needs:**

The client needs to define a marketing strategy to gain attention on both their blog and book. This strategy includes social media ideas, word of mouth marketing, influencer marketing, and financial budget.

**Perceived Publics:**

The perceived publics are generally college-aged students who enjoy traveling and who are considering or planning on studying abroad.

**Media Channels used:**

They are currently using Instagram, Facebook, and Pinterest to advertise the blog. They plan on using Instagram and Facebook to promote the book.

**Website:**

[www.travelbigspendless.com](http://www.travelbigspendless.com)

**Social Media:**

Instagram: [@travelbigspendless](https://www.instagram.com/travelbigspendless)

Facebook: [@travelbigspendless](https://www.facebook.com/travelbigspendless)

Pinterest: [@travelbigspendless](https://www.pinterest.com/travelbigspendless)

## **Needs Assessment**

### **Strengths:**

- The book is from a student perspective.
- The book and blog are based off of recent experiences

### **Opportunities:**

- There are few student-written study abroad books in the market.
- Study abroad rates keep increasing each year.

### **Weaknesses:**

- The book is only focused on Western Europe travel.
- The client is not active on social media nor do they have a big following.
- The existing blog clashes with the book format

### **Threats:**

- The coronavirus outbreak has put a stop on study abroad.
- Similar information to the book already exists on their blog and other websites.
- There are existing study abroad books and blogs.

### **Media Sources:**

- I would like to use social media to create awareness of both the blog as well as the upcoming book through posting on social media channels such as Instagram and Facebook.

### **Identify Demographic Groups:**



- 18-23 year old college students.
- White females
- Lives in urban areas and college towns

## **Research Objectives:**

- **Media Habits:**
  - Both the book and the blog are specifically targeted at students aged 18 - 23 years old. According to Sprout Social, 76% of 18-24 year olds use Facebook daily. Furthermore, 51% of these individuals are going on Facebook multiple times a day. Instagram's daily login is still second to Facebook with 63% of its users logging in daily. Similarly to Facebook, 75% of 18-24 year olds use Instagram daily.<sup>1</sup> The most effective form of paid advertising on Instagram are picture ads.<sup>2</sup> Overall, this research helps clarify the media habits of the target audience.
- **Existing Knowledge:**
  - There are very few individuals who are aware of the clients blog and upcoming book. After the coronavirus outbreak, the client should begin to promote their voice and their message. With proper marketing and social media advertising, the client will be able to get on college students radar.
- **Attitudes, Beliefs, Judgements:**

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<sup>1</sup> (Sprout Social)

<sup>2</sup> (Statista, 2020)

- This research objective will help clarify if students and parents would be interested to hear about their fellow peers' experience as well as support their message.

- **Primary Research:**

- Qualitative data such as interviews were collected to help clarify the beliefs and attitudes towards the upcoming book.

- **Secondary Research:**

- Quantitative data on the current study abroad market as well as the competitor market was collected to determine how many people actually study abroad as well as the success of competitors.

## **Primary Research**

Interviews were conducted with students who have studied abroad as well as students who have not. The goal was to find out if these students seemed excited about the book and thought it was a good idea or not. A total number of seven interviews were conducted throughout this research.

In addition to student interviews, other interviews were conducted as well. Parent interviews, book publisher interviews, and editor interviews were conducted.

### **Interview Questions:**

- What do you think about this study abroad book?
- Would you have purchased this book before you studied abroad?
- What section of this book most excites you?
- Do you think students will find interest in this book?

### **Student Interviews:**

- “I wish that I would have had a book like this when I studied abroad.” - Victoria Cohen, Agricultural Communications Senior - studied abroad in Leon, France
- “Wow, this is such a great idea. I definitely want to read it before I go abroad in the Fall.” - Shae Vomund, Business Sophomore - plans on studying abroad in Prague

- “I would definitely read it! I think it is super great that you incorporate your own experiences as well.” - Maile Mcpherson, Journalism Senior - studied abroad in Prague
- “I love that your book will have three different sections. I am most excited to read about how to deal with Post Abroad!” - Emma Davitz, Business Senior - studied abroad in Australia

#### **Parent Interviews:**

- “I really wanted to buy my daughter a book like that before she left! I think this is a great idea.” - Cal Poly Mom
- “This is a great present to give your child before they leave!” Cal Poly Mom

#### **Book Publisher Interview:**

- “Make sure you know who your target audience is and to find groups that study abroad industry experts and students go to.”
- “Find speaking engagements to attend and create your own speaking engagements.”

## **Secondary Research**

### **Study Abroad Research:**

Secondary research aims to understand how many students actually study abroad each year and identify current trends in this category. According to MRI Media Mark, 67% of study abroad students are white and 70% are females. On the other hand, only 29.2% of students who identify as racial or ethnic minorities studied abroad in 2017.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the most common majors are Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math with a total of 87,500 students.<sup>4</sup> Lastly, each year 187,000 students go to Europe. This research indicates that the target audience for the campaign should be primarily white females who are between the ages 18-23 years old.

### **Competitive Research:**

Competitive research helps indicate where Madison's and Jessica's study abroad book falls. There are currently two study abroad books on Amazon. However, the two books are not written by students.

The first book is titled, "A Student Guide to Study Abroad" and was written in 2013. The synopsis is, "This book helps make the case, and guides students through the process with 100 practical, easy-to-follow tips. The book provides comprehensive information that students, parents, and study abroad advisers can trust. Each chapter contains lively and engaging how-to information, including useful anecdotes from students and

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<sup>3</sup> (USA Study Abroad)

<sup>4</sup> (MRI, Media Mark)

advisers.” This book seems to be more serious and less humorous than theirs. In addition, the book is not written by a student, rather it is written by three different study abroad advisors<sup>5</sup>. Even though this book is targeted for students, the author can not totally relate to students since they are actually not students.

The second study abroad book was written in 2016 and is titled, “Prepare for Departure.” This book covers three different parts of abroad: planning, process, and practice. The author “managed the student life division of a study abroad program in Italy, and she draws on lessons from nine years (and thousands of students) to help those who are headed abroad have a smoother ride.” Once again, this book is not written by a like-minded student. This research shows that their book has a special niche. There are currently zero study abroad books written by students. In addition, these books are not aesthetically pleasing. For that reason, Madison and Jess have a good chance at getting attention for their book.

### **Target Audience Research:**

The target audience for this campaign is Gen Z. According to Global Web Index’s 2019 report on Gen Z, “this age group greatly prefers the on-the-go convenience of their mobile devices over PCs and even laptops.”<sup>6</sup> This shows that it is important for the client to reach their target audience through their mobile device.

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<sup>5</sup> (Amazon)

<sup>6</sup> (Global Web Index 2019)

### Online Behaviors by Device

% who did the following online last month via...

● Mobile ● PC/Laptop



This chart shows that Gen Z did not fully abandon their computers, rather they mostly use their mobile devices. Furthermore, “Instagram is the most popular app for brand discovery, with 45% of teens using it to find cool new products, followed by Facebook, which comes in at 40%”<sup>7</sup>. This research suggests that Travel Big Spend Less could use Instagram and Facebook as its primary ways of reaching the target audience. Moreover, the brand needs to make sure that their book gets formatted as an ebook. Lastly, the blog will need to be mobile friendly.

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<sup>7</sup> (Hootsuite)

## **Goals**

### **Instagram:**

Their goal with Instagram is to make it a platform that study abroad students go to for inspiration. They want to showcase study abroad students from all over the world on this account.

### **Facebook:**

Their goal with Facebook is to grow their page and join other travel groups so they can get visibility. They will be creating FB ads to get more awareness as well as book sales and website traffic.

### **Affiliate Marketing:**

Another one of their goals is to utilize affiliate marketing. To accomplish this they will need to sign up to be affiliates for travel-related companies. Once they are accepted to those, they will place them throughout their future blog posts. The goal of this tactic is to eventually make money off of affiliates.

### **Influencer Marketing:**

One of their main goals is to create relationships with other travel bloggers. By creating these relationships they will be able to utilize these connections to get the bloggers to share their content on social media.



**Financial Budget:**

The clients financial goals stay below \$1000. They want to use this budget for ad campaigns on Facebook and Instagram. In addition, the client needs to have money for other necessary graphic design assets.

## **Marketing/Advertising Campaign**

### **Campaign Objective:**

The objective is to use social media to get awareness of their blog and purchases of their book. Ultimately, the strategy will be centered around a social media CPC campaign.

### **Targeting - Target Audience:**

Their target audience is primarily college-aged students from 18-23 years old. Additionally, white females who live in urban cities. Through research, it was made clear that most students who study abroad are female and are white. Moreover, because Mada and Jess go to school in San Luis Obispo and are from California, it is recommended that they target the SLO neighborhood as well as other areas like LA, SD, and SF.

### **Targeting - General Consumer Profile:**

The target market consumer would be a 19-year old math or science major in their second year of college. This college student lives in a college town similar to San Luis Obispo or Santa Barbara. In addition, this student does not stress too much about money because their parents help them out financially. They've grown up in an urban city and have never moved before so they are looking to use their study abroad experience as a way to branch out. In addition, they are white and identify as female.

They are researching and considering to study abroad in Western Europe, preferably Prague, Spain, or Italy.

### **Targeting - Consumer Profile - Sophia:**

Sophia is a 19-year old Math student at UCSB and has always dreamed of studying abroad in Spain. She is in her first semester of sophomore year and is excited to finally choose her dream place to study abroad, Spain. However, she is nervous about leaving her friends from home behind as well as her boyfriend. Sophia's family is supportive of her decision to study abroad but wants her to be prepared to be away from home for three months as well as be prepared to be on her own. The advertisements will target people like Sophia by using social media. For instance, Instagram has the ability to target keywords that Sophia and individuals similar to her search.

### **The Advertising Message:**

Travel Big Spend Less will change to "Travel More Stress Less" since the book does not solely focus on budgeting. Even though the book is its own separate brand, the client still wants to attempt to unify the book and the website. By changing the website and social media channels to Travel More Stress Less, the advertising message will be more focused on finding ways to ease one's worries while traveling. In addition, this message is more young and relatable since most people carry stress with them wherever they go. Also, the messaging needs to be full of excitement to get others

excited and wanting to travel and study abroad. It will be personable and come across as both Madison and Jess are along for the journey with you.

### **Advertising Plan - Social Media Campaign:**

The client will focus on both Instagram and Facebook for this marketing strategy. The reason for this is not only because their goal is to grow those channels but also because the research suggests that those two platforms are the most effective way of reaching their target audience.

Creative assets will be created for both platforms to catch awareness. Content will be posted regularly, particularly at 11:00am for Instagram. Examples of content consist of travel photos, packing tips, and stories from students who are planning to study abroad, currently studying abroad, and recently got back from studying abroad.

### **Advertising Plan - Incentivized Giveaways:**



The giveaway will be the client's book. The estimated cost of this giveaway will be \$133. The reasoning behind this price is because the cost to print a book and ship it is \$6.65 and the giveaway will include 20 books. If 20 books are given away then this will give them 1,000 more followers. This would be implemented through Instagram. First, to enter, individuals must be following the Instagram accounts, 3

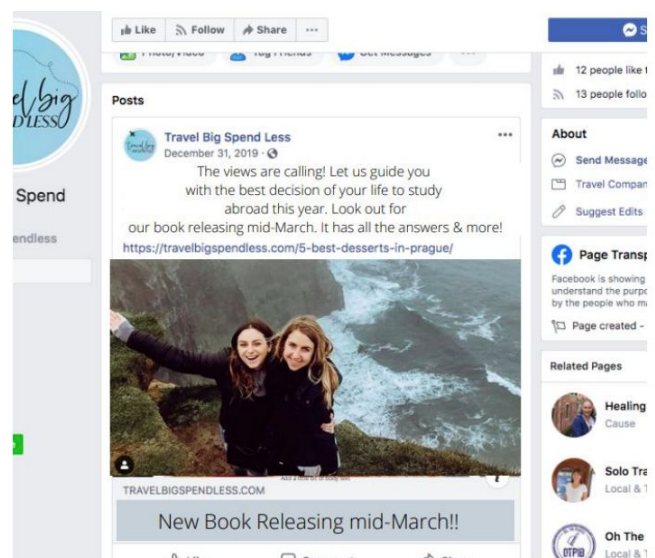
friends must be tagged in the reply, and the entrant must share the post on their instagram story. Winners will be chosen randomly every 50 new followers and will be given one free “A Guide to Studying Abroad” book. Ultimately, this giveaway will bring more awareness to the client’s brand as well as bring awareness to the book. Once the client has made some money, these giveaways will start to become bigger with eventually a free weekend trip to somewhere.

### Advertising Plan - Paid Advertisements:

The client should focus on CPC campaigns for Instagram and Facebook. The campaign will run for a month long and the total cost will add up to \$723. The breakdown of this cost is as follows:

- Instagram: \$0.70 per click. Buy 750 clicks for \$525
- Facebook: \$0.27 per click. Buy 750 clicks for \$202.5

Here are two examples of what a paid advertisement on Instagram and Facebook would look like:



These mockups represent simplicity, ease, and excitement. Other paid advertisements would also be used to increase awareness of the upcoming book as well as the blog. Lastly, this campaign will be segmented to their target personas. The demographics will be 18-23 year old white females who live in urban areas and who are interested in Study Abroad, Europe, and travel.

### **Advertising Plan - Influencer Strategy**

This strategy will use instagram as its primary channel. Moreover, it will be considered an IG TV Series with 3 different influencers from Cal Poly. These influencers will be students in their sophomore year of college because they will be the ones who are planning their study abroad trip. The requirement for these influencers is for them to have large followings on their instagram account and are planning to study abroad. Each influencer will have an IG TV series on the @travelbigspendless Instagram with three videos focused on preparing for traveling abroad, traveling abroad, and transitioning from being abroad back to Cal Poly. Each of these videos will include tips and tricks from the books and travel spots pinned by the blog. These videos can also be published to the blog and Pinterest.<sup>8</sup>

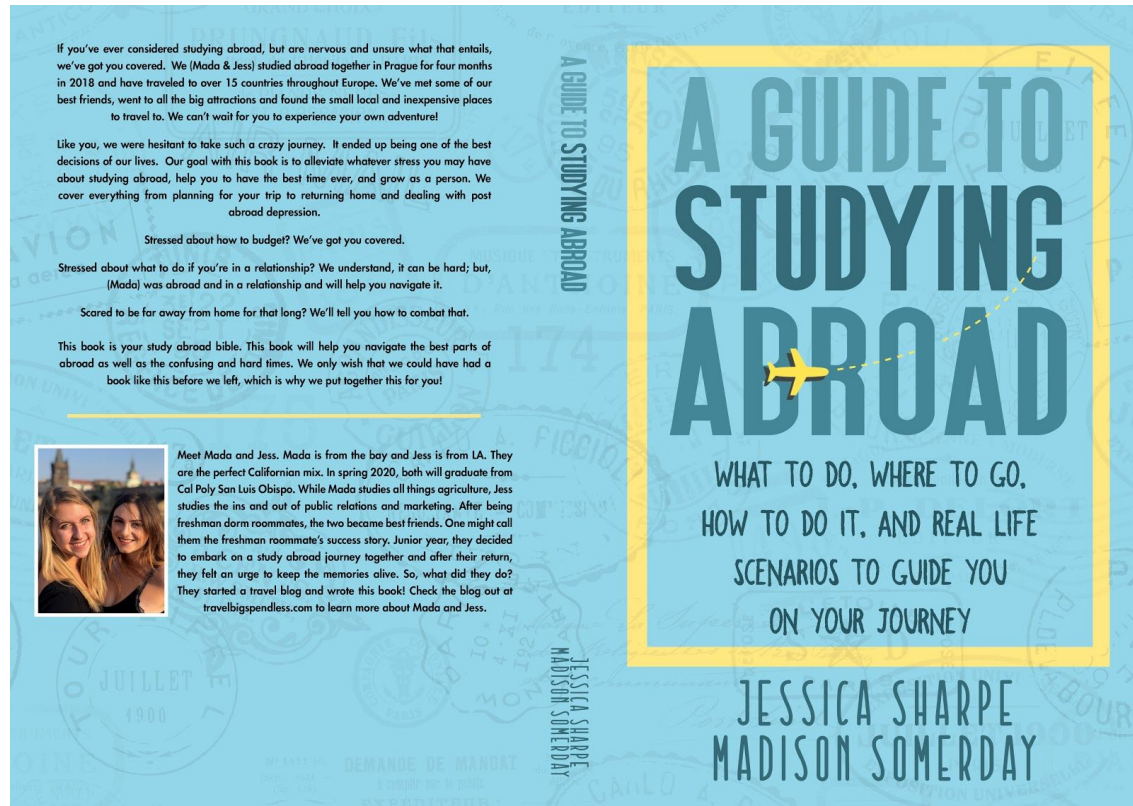
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<sup>8</sup> (JOUR Advertising Class)

**Evaluation Plan:**

Travel Big Spend Less will know that this campaign is working by looking at the KPI metrics provided by Tailwind and Hootsuite. The client already uses Tailwind for Pinterest which is why the recommendation is to use Tailwind for Instagram as well. Tailwind will help track growth on Instagram's following, likes, and comments. On the other hand, Hootsuite will be used to evaluate the success on Facebook. Hootsuite gives insight and data to understand who and when people interact with the content. Moreover, the tool shows the number of individuals on the FB page, page likes, post reach, post likes, engagement, and page followers. These metrics will determine which posts are doing well and which are not. Ultimately, Travel Big Spend Less will be able to reevaluate their social presence and continue to improve on their content.

## Appendix



Book Cover

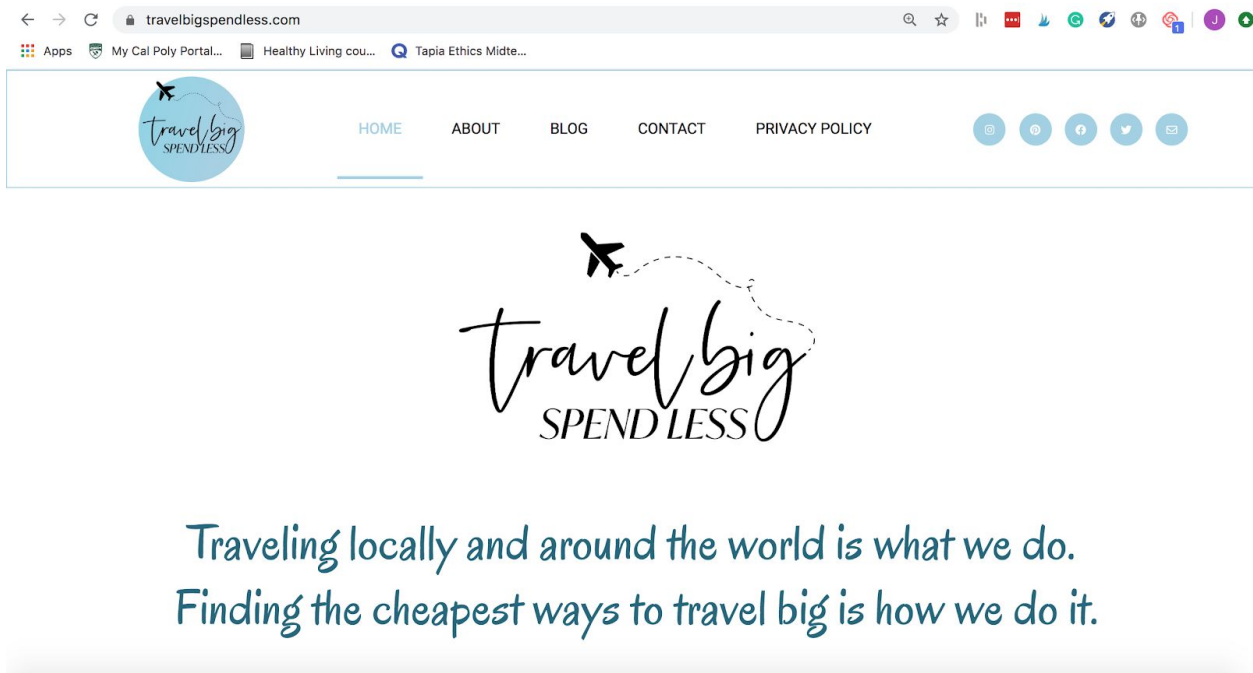




Logo



Favicon



Website Home Page



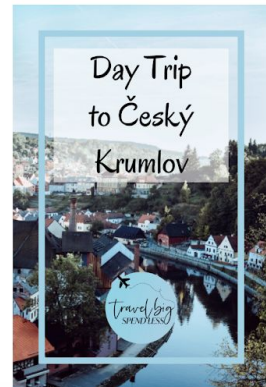
HOME

ABOUT

BLOG

CONTACT

PRIVACY POLICY



## Blog Page



HOME

ABOUT

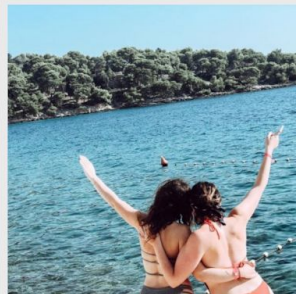
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